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SUBJECT: NEPAL TO TOE DEVELOPING NATION LINE IN COPENHAGEN

REF: KATHMANDU 1104

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal departed for Copenhagen on December 14 to attend the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) summit, at which he is expected to join his counterparts from other developing nations in demanding that developed nations do more address global warming. The demands will likely include requiring developed nations to contribute at least 1.5 percent of their gross domestic product to a fund that would assist developing nations to adapt to climate change. The UNFCCC conference is the first international meeting the Prime Minister has attended since Nepal became chair of the Lesser Developed Countries (LDC) Group. END SUMMARY.

Nepal Vocal About Its Demands

¶2. (U) The Government of Nepal's stance at the UNFCCC conference will be very much in line with the G-77 developing countries' position on climate change, support for which the GON lobbied strongly, and largely successfully, during the Kathmandu to Copenhagen Conference it hosted in September. It is highly unlikely Nepal will deviate from the points it and eight other South Asian nations agreed to at that meeting. These include requiring developed nations to contribute at least 1.5 percent of their gross domestic product to a fund that would assist Nepal and other developing nations to adapt to climate change. Nepal is also expected to support the call for developed nations to meet strict green house gas (GHG) emission targets -- a 45-percent reduction by 2020 and an 85-percent reduction by 2050.

¶3. (U) In addition to financial help, Nepal will ask developed nations for the technical support needed to implement its National Adaptation Program of Action. Nepali officials have been very vocal, regionally and internationally, in their demand that the developed world provide both the finance and technology needed for adaptation, stressing that Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries to the adverse impact of climate change.

¶4. (U) Modification of the UN Collaborative Program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD) is another top agenda item for Nepal and one where its stance is generally aligned with the U.S. position. Nepal will, among other things, seek to have the program revised to include sustainable forest development as a key component. It will also insist that developing countries be given expanded credit for their forest protection efforts.

¶5. (U) As a strong supporter of the Clean Development Mechanism, the GON is likely to demand that it be further streamlined so that Nepal and other developing countries can

derive more benefits. It is also expected to use the Copenhagen conference to request more assistance to develop its largely untapped hydropower potential, an estimated 45,000 megawatts of which is considered economically feasible.

¶16. (U) To underscore their call for urgent international cooperation and assistance to address the adverse affects of climate change on the Himalayas, Prime Minister Nepal and his Cabinet held a meeting at the base of Mount Everest on December 4. (Note. The Everest Declaration adopted at the meeting is below. End note.) Nepali officials are hopeful that they can use the country's role as chair of the 50-member LDC Group to garner sufficient support in Copenhagen to ensure that the meeting does not become a mere publicity stunt.

Small Nation, Large Delegation

¶17. (U) Prime Minister Nepal is heading an 80-member official delegation, which critics note is larger than the delegations sent by neighboring India and China. The strongest criticism has come from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose head, Deputy Prime Minister Sujata Koirala, withdrew from the delegation, which was funded by international development and non-governmental organizations. Nepal has been allocated just six official seats at the UNFCCC summit.

Team Nepal

¶18. (SBU) In addition to the Prime Minister, the delegation includes three of his top advisors, seven ministers,

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Constituent Assembly members, senior government bureaucrats, and others. Below is the biodata of the principal members:

(a) Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal: Prime Minister since May 2009, Nepal heads a shaky 21-party coalition government. (The country's largest party, the United Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, remains outside the governing coalition.) PM Nepal faces many significant challenges, most notably concluding the peace process and finalizing the new constitution by May 2010. Although the PM has made climate change one of his signature issues, he is not familiar with the details of the issue. The PM, who speaks excellent English, met President Obama in September at the U.S.-sponsored event with UN troop contributing countries on the margins of UNGA.

(b) Thakur Sharma, Minister of Environment: The Ministry of Environment is the focal ministry for UNFCCC and entrusted to negotiate on behalf of the GON. Sharma, who represents a fringe party in the current coalition government, has so far had a lackluster tenure as head of the Ministry. Although helpful and supportive in hosting events and meetings to highlight the impact of climate change in Nepal, he has not actively promoted substantial programs to address the problem. He is soft spoken with limited English.

(c) Deepak Bohra, Minister of Forest and Soil Conservation: Bohra, chief architect of the Cabinet meeting at the foot of Everest, is perhaps the most dynamic high-level official in the delegation. He has been very vocal and active pushing wildlife conservation and climate change to the top of national, regional and global agendas. Even though the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation is not the GON's official negotiator, Bohra, who chairs the country's National Trust for Nature Conservation. could be a good contact on issues related to glacial melt, forests and mountains. He speaks English well.

(d) Udaya Raj Sharma, Secretary, Ministry of Environment: Sharma, who is U.S. educated, is the most senior career bureaucrat in the delegation and has a strong technical background on forest and environmental issues. Recently transferred to the Environment Ministry from the Forest

Ministry because of differences of opinion with the Minister -- a common practice in Nepal -- Sharma is expected to retire soon from government service. He speaks excellent English.

(e) Purushottam Ghimire, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment: For the past few years, Ghimire has been the lead Ministry bureaucrat in UNFCCC negotiations, and as such may be familiar to Washington's climate negotiating team. He is very approachable and speaks English well.

Everest Declaration on Climate Change

19. Friday, December 4, 2009, Kalapatthar, Everest Base Camp, 5542 meters, Nepal

-- Commit to work in cooperation with South Asian nations and the rest of the world to protect the vulnerable Himalayan and mountain ecosystem to climate change and to draw the attention of the global community.

-- Launch a public awareness campaign in both the local and national level by conducting studies on the unprecedented effects of climate change on the Himalayan Range and on the local habitants and life styles of especially the poor, the marginalized, indigenous groups, Dalits, women and children, and the steps that can be taken to minimize them.

-- Timely address the adverse effects of climate change and to develop emergency alert systems, various climate change models, and capacity-building solutions, to raise timely resilience in agriculture and other areas.

-- Expand the existing mountain ecosystem conservation area from 20 percent to 25 percent and consolidate 40 percent forest area. Declare Gauri Shankar and Api-Nampa conservation areas as a show of our commitment.

-- Seek support from the global community to effectively implement a work plan appropriate for Nepal that addresses the effects of climate change on Nepal's socio-economic area, especially water resources, agriculture, bio-diversity, forests, human life, and human health. And to support the

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developed countries' plans to contribute 1.5 percent of GDP to a climate change adaptation fund.

-- Draw the attention of developed nations and neighboring countries by letting them know that Nepal can make itself the least carbon-emitting country in the region by developing its clean energy sector and urge them to contribute and invest for the development of suitable and modern technology in Nepal.

-- In order for Nepal to benefit from the Clean Development Mechanism's (CDM) funds, take steps to revise CDM's funding provisions so that they are more simplified and beneficial to poor countries.

-- In order to prevent a catastrophic climate change from occurring as a result of human activities, call to keep the greenhouse gases levels to below 350 PPM and not allow the surface temperature of the Earth to rise above 1.5 degree centigrade of the pre-industrial levels.

-- Draw attention on the fact that very few studies and research have been done on the effect of climate change on the melting snows and glaciers in the mountain areas.

-- Call to bring down greenhouse gases levels to minimize their effects on the mountain and Himalayan ecosystem. And urge nations violating greenhouse gases emission levels to pay fine and that fine be used in providing compensation and relief to poor countries and people adversely affected by it.

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